

EVALUATION & REDUCTION OF LEAD-BASED PAINT HAZARDS: The Lead-Safe Cambridge Program

Since 1994, a series of four concurrent HUD grants (“Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control”) totaling \$10.2 million dollars have supported the work of the Lead-Safe Cambridge (LSC) program. In Spring 2004, LSC will submit a renewal application to HUD for a fifth round of funding.

During the 2005 fiscal year, LSC will assist property owners in de-leading up to 60 housing units. The program provides assistance to property owners who rent to very low and low-income families by arranging inspections and abatement; relocating families during deleading; assisting children under the age of six by providing referral for testing and medical follow-up; and by assuming the full cost of inspections and up to \$10,000 per unit for lead hazard control. Broad-based community outreach and education services are employed to prevent childhood lead poisoning by raising awareness, changing behavior, and connecting people with resources. Priority is given to low or very low-income families with children less than six years old. The affordability to low and very low-income families of the de-leaded units is secured through a five-year note and mortgage, which specifies income and rent thresholds, as well as a loan recapture provision if the affordable housing covenant is breached.

LSC strives to achieve two major policy goals: increasing access to affordable lead-safe housing for low income families, and preventing the lead poisoning of Cambridge children. To this end, as of March 2004, the program has deleaded over 560 units of affordable housing. The program also provides soil testing and interim control landscaping services to address lead in soil through its innovative and award winning Safer Soil program. To date, over 150 yards have been made lead safe through the intervention of the Safer Soil program.

LSC has been the recipient of several prestigious awards. In 1999, the Safer Soil project was recognized for its innovative approach to addressing an environmental problem through landscape design by receiving an American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Merit Award. In 2000, LSC received the “2000 HUD Best Practices Award of Excellence” for its work in creating affordable lead-safe housing and reducing lead poisoning rates in Cambridge. And, in 2003, LSC was the proud recipient of the eighth “Innovations in Fair Housing Award” from the Cambridge Human Rights Commission.